# Report of the External Review Team for Thomasville City Schools

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# Introduction

The External Review is an integral component of AdvancED Performance Accreditation and provides the institution with a comprehensive evaluation guided by the results of diagnostic instruments, in-depth review of data and documentation, and the professional judgment of a team of qualified and highly trained evaluators. A series of diagnostic instruments examines the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of leadership to effect continuous improvement, and the degree to which the institution optimizes its use of available resources to facilitate and support student success.  The results of this evaluation are represented in the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) and through critical observations, namely, Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. Today the accreditation process is used at all levels of education and is recognized for its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education.

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED Standards specific to their institution type, demonstrate acceptable levels of student performance and the continuous improvement of student performance, and provide evidence of stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the conditions, processes, and practices within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Standards help to delineate what matters. They provide a common language through which an education community can engage in conversations about educational improvement, system effectiveness, and achievement. They serve as a foundation for planning and implementing improvement strategies and activities and for measuring success. AdvancED Standards were developed by a committee comprised of talented educators and leaders from the fields of practice, research, and policy who applied professional wisdom, deep knowledge of effective practice, and the best available research to craft a set of robust standards that define institutional quality and guide continuous improvement. Prior to implementation, an internationally recognized panel of experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research reviewed the standards and provided feedback, guidance and endorsement.

The AdvancED External Review Team uses AdvancED Standards, associated indicators and criteria related to student performance and stakeholder engagement to guide its evaluation. The Team examines adherence to standards as well as how the institution functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics expected of an accredited institution. The Standards, indicators and related criteria are evaluated using indicator-specific performance levels. The Team rates each indicator and criterion on a scale of 1 to 4. The final scores assigned to the indicators and criteria represent the average of the External Review Team members' individual ratings.

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that

may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

# Use of Diagnostic Tools

A key to examining the institution is the design and use of diagnostic tools that reveal the effectiveness with which an institution creates conditions and implements processes and practices that impact student performance and success. In preparation for the External Review the institution conducted a Self Assessment that applied the standards and criteria for accreditation. The institution provided evidence to support its conclusions vis a vis organizational effectiveness in ensuring acceptable and improving levels of student performance.

- an indicator-based tool that connects the specific elements of the criteria to evidence gathered by the team;
- a student performance analytic that examines the quality of assessment instruments used by the institution, the integrity of the administration of the assessment to students, the quality of the learning results including the impact of instruction on student learning at all levels of performance, and the equity of learning that examines the results of student learning across all demographics;
- a stakeholder engagement instrument that examines the fidelity of administration and results of perception surveys seeking the perspective of students, parents, and teachers;
- a state-of-the-art, learner-centric observation instrument, the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) that quantifies students' engagement, attitudes and dispositions organized in 7 environments: Equitable Learning, High Expectations, Supportive Learning, Active Learning, Progress Monitoring and Feedback, Well-Managed Learning, and Digital Learning.  All evaluators must be trained, reach acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability, and certified to use this research-based and validated instrument.

The External Review Team's findings and critical observations are shared in this report through the IEQ™ results as well as through the identification of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

# Index of Education Quality

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status.  Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ™ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring and demonstrated improvement.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and associated indicators, the analysis of student performance, and the engagement and feedback of stakeholders. Within each domain institutions can connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria.  Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that serve as a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report and building on their Powerful Practices, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Opportunity for Improvement and Improvement Priority as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected indicator(s).

The IEQ™ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. An institution's IEQ™ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Subsequent actions for improvement and evidence that these have had a positive impact will raise the institution's IEQ™ score.

# Benchmark Data

Throughout this report, AdvancED provides benchmark data for each indicator and for each component of the evaluative criteria. These benchmark data represent the overall averages across the entire AdvancED Network for your institution type. Thus, the AdvancED Network average provides an extraordinary opportunity for institutions to understand their context on a global scale rather than simply compared to a state, region, or country.

It is important to understand that the AdvancED Network averages are provided primarily to serve as a tool for continuous improvement and not as a measure of quality in and of itself. Benchmark data, when wisely employed, have a unique capacity to help institutions identify and leverage their strengths and areas of improvement to significantly impact student learning.

# Powerful Practices

A key to continuous improvement is the institution's ability to learn from and build upon its most effective and impactful practices.  Such practices serve as critical leverage points necessary to guide, support and ensure continuous improvement.  A hallmark of the accreditation process is its commitment to identifying with evidence, the conditions, processes and practices that are having the most significant impact on student performance and institutional effectiveness.  Throughout this report, the External Review Team has captured and defined Powerful Practices.  These noteworthy practices are essential to the institution's effort to continue its journey of improvement.

# Opportunities for Improvement

Every institution can and must improve no matter what levels of performance it has achieved in its past. During the process of the review, the External Review Team identified areas of improvement where the institution is meeting the expectations for accreditation but in the professional judgment of the Team these are Opportunities for Improvement that should be considered by the institution. Using the criteria described in the corresponding rubric(s) to the Opportunity for Improvement, the institution can identify what elements of practice must be addressed to guide the improvement.

# Improvement Priorities

The expectations for accreditation are clearly defined in a series of the rubric-based AdvancED Standards, indicators and evaluative criteria focused on the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of the institution to be guided by effective leadership, and the allocation and use of resources to support student learning. As such, the External Review Team reviewed, analyzed and deliberated over significant bodies of evidence provided by the institution and gathered by the Team during the process. In the professional judgment of the Team as well as the results of the diagnostic process, the Team defined, with rationale, Improvement Priorities.  The priorities must be addressed in a timely manner by the institution to retain and improve their accreditation performance as represented by the IEQ™. Improvement Priorities serve as the basis for the follow-up and monitoring process that will begin upon conclusion of the External Review. The institution must complete and submit an Accreditation Progress Report within two years of the External Review. The report must include actions taken by the institution to address the Improvement Priorities along with the corresponding evidence and results.  The IEQ™ will be recalculated by AdvancED upon review of the evidence and results associated with the Improvement Priorities.

# The Review

A group of five educators from three different states conducted the AdvancED External Review of Thomasville City Schools in Thomasville, Georgia, from April 12-15, 2015.  During this four-day period, Team members reviewed numerous documents and artifacts prepared by Thomasville City School's administrators and conducted extensive interviews with various stakeholder groups including parents, students, teachers, support staff members and administrators from the five different schools in the district. Team members observed students learning in 37 classrooms in all the schools in the district including the Scholars Academy and the Academic Performance Center.

Prior to the on-site review, the Team used the AdvancED on-line workspace to review documents submitted by the school district, including the system Accreditation Report with self assessment ratings, each of the five schools' Accreditation Reports, the district strategic plan and each school's improvement plan.  The Team reviewed the school district AdvancED survey data including an analysis of the parent and staff feedback.  The student performance data was reviewed both in trend charts and graphs and an analysis of state test results.

Approximately one month before the External Review, Team members participated in an evening conference call, providing an orientation for the off-site work and planning for the expectations of reviewing the school

district website and the leading documents of the schools and in order to become familiar with the demographics of the school district and the community of Thomasville. The Lead Evaluator held numerous phone conversations with the school district contact persons and discussed the expectations of the review process with the superintendent prior to the visit.

The External Review Team members began their on-site work on Sunday afternoon, April 12 in order to review additional documents that the system leaders had prepared in an electronic form such as organizational charts, findings from budget audits, school schedules and various samples of instructional staff evaluations with the names removed. The Team reviewed the schedule for the four-day visit and prepared for the first day of interviews as well as perused the district website where links were available to access state data warehouses of student achievement information.

Monday morning and afternoon was spent interviewing school administrators, all seven school board members, support staff personnel, and principals from the five schools in the district and the supplemental programs such as the Scholars Academy and the Academic Performance Center.  Monday evening was spent in Team deliberations, Standards/Indicator ratings, and preparations for Tuesday's school visits.

The Team spent Tuesday visiting all five schools in the system including varied demographics and levels of education.  When visiting the schools, the Team interviewed students and teachers and observed students learning in classroom settings.  Tuesday evening was spent in discussions, Standard/Indicator ratings, and identifying themes across all interviews and observations in the schools reflecting Powerful Practices, and possible Opportunities for Improvement.

On Wednesday morning, the Team finalized three Powerful Practices identified throughout the External Review, two Opportunities for Improvement, and two Improvement Priorities, including identifying supportive evidence for each of the Indicators listed in the Standards.  All of this work culminated in an Oral Exit Report presented to the Thomasville City School Board, school administrators, teachers and the public on Wednesday afternoon April 15.

It was clear to the Team that the school district was well-prepared to host the External Review, both in readying the artifacts and documentation to be reviewed, and in arranging for the interviews and school visits across the system.  Everyone was candid and professional during the school visits.  Throughout the interview process, faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members provided valuable insight into the teaching and learning processes in the schools.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance.  The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review.  The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

| Stakeholder Interviewed | Number |
|---|---|
| Superintendents | 1 |
| Board Members | 7 |
| Administrators | 19 |
| Instructional Staff | 45 |
| Support Staff | 21 |
| Students | 48 |
| Parents/Community/Business Leaders | 17 |
| **Total** | **158** |

# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement is the primary expectation of every institution. The relationship between teacher and learner must be productive and effective for student success. The impact of teaching and learning includes an analysis of student performance results, instructional quality, learner and family engagement, support services for student learning, curriculum quality and efficacy, and college and career readiness data. These are all key indicators of an institution's impact on teaching and learning.

A high-quality and effective educational system has services, practices, and curriculum that ensure teacher effectiveness. Research has shown that an effective teacher is a key factor for learners to achieve their highest potential and be prepared for a successful future. The positive influence an effective educator has on learning is a combination of "student motivation, parental involvement" and the "quality of leadership" (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Research also suggests that quality educators must have a variety of quantifiable and intangible characteristics that include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The institution's curriculum and instructional program should develop learners' skills that lead them to think about the world in complex ways (Conley, 2007) and prepare them to have knowledge that extends beyond the academic areas. In order to achieve these goals, teachers must have pedagogical skills as well as content knowledge (Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y., 2010). The acquisition and refinement of teachers' pedagogical skills occur most effectively through collaboration and professional development. These are a "necessary approach to improving teacher quality" (Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S., 2008). According to Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002), staff members who engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective institutions "supports teachers by creating collaborative work environments." Institutional leaders have a responsibility to provide experiences, resources, and time for educators to engage in meaningful professional learning that promotes student learning and educator quality.

AdvancED has found that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning. The curriculum provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Institutions with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six

key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision-making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

Through ongoing evaluation of educational institutions, AdvancED has found that a successful institution uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine strategies to improve student performance. The institution implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained, and the institution demonstrates progress in improving student performance and institution effectiveness.

## Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 | The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level. | 3.00 | 2.69 |
| 3.2 | Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice. | 2.80 | 2.55 |
| 3.3 | Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations. | 2.80 | 2.54 |
| 3.4 | System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success. | 3.00 | 2.70 |
| 3.5 | The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels. | 2.00 | 2.57 |
| 3.6 | Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning. | 3.40 | 2.48 |
| 3.7 | Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning. | 2.00 | 2.67 |

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 | The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress. | 3.00 | 2.97 |
| 3.9 | The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience. | 2.40 | 2.46 |
| 3.10 | Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses. | 2.80 | 2.57 |
| 3.11 | All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning. | 2.80 | 2.60 |
| 3.12 | The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students. | 3.80 | 2.63 |

# Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1 | The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system. | 3.00 | 2.67 |
| 5.2 | Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning. | 2.20 | 2.48 |
| 5.3 | Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data. | 2.20 | 2.14 |
| 5.4 | The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level. | 2.80 | 2.45 |
| 5.5 | System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders. | 2.80 | 2.85 |

# Student Performance Diagnostic

The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of
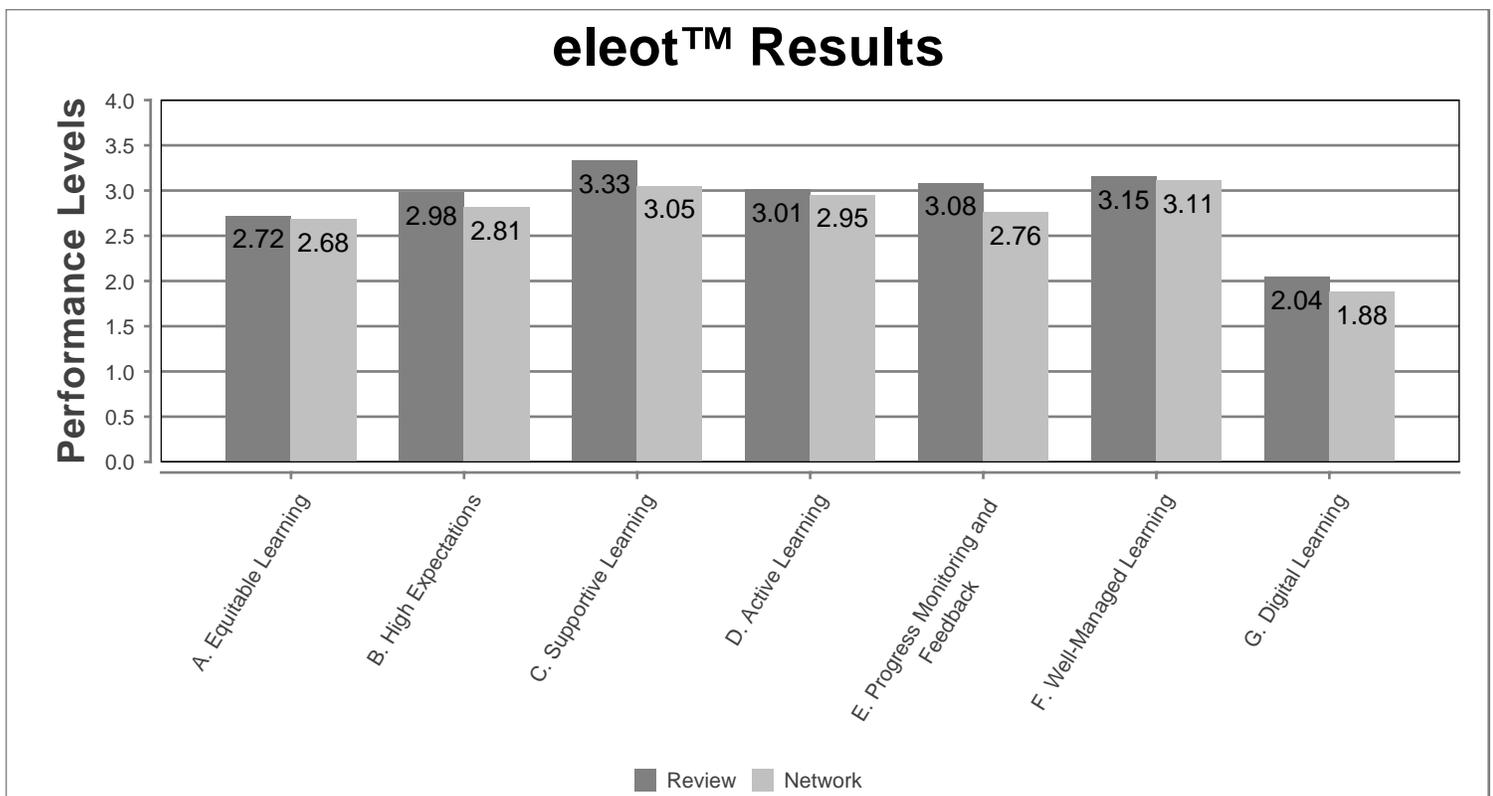
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

| Evaluative Criteria | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|
| Assessment Quality | 3.00 | 3.32 |
| Test Administration | 3.00 | 3.62 |
| Equity of Learning | 2.80 | 2.52 |
| Quality of Learning | 3.00 | 3.06 |

# Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

Every learner should have access to an effective learning environment in which she/he has multiple opportunities to be successful. The Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) measures the extent to which learners are in an environment that is equitable, supportive, and well-managed. An environment where high expectations are the norm and active learning takes place. It measures whether learners' progress is monitored and feedback is provided and the extent to which technology is leveraged for learning.

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (4=very evident; 3=evident; 2=somewhat evident; and 1=not observed). The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.

## eleot™ Results

Performance Levels

| Environment | Review | Network |
|---|---|---|
| A. Equitable Learning | 2.72 | 2.68 |
| B. High Expectations | 2.98 | 2.81 |
| C. Supportive Learning | 3.33 | 3.05 |
| D. Active Learning | 3.01 | 2.95 |
| E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback | 3.08 | 2.76 |
| F. Well-Managed Learning | 3.15 | 3.11 |
| G. Digital Learning | 2.04 | 1.88 |

■ Review  ■ Network

The External Review Team utilized the eleot™ instrument in observing 37 classrooms in five different schools in the Thomasville City School District and determined ratings for each of the seven learning environments as Team members visited classrooms.   The Team observed students learning in kindergarten through high school content area classes in a variety of subjects and content areas.  The highest ratings on the eleot™ scale were in the "Supportive Learning Environment" (with a team average rating of 3.31 compared to the

AdvancED network average of 3.05) and in the "Well-Managed Learning Environment" (with cumulative average ratings of 3.13 compared to the AdvancED network average of 3.11).  The lowest Team ratings in classroom observations with the eleot™ observation tool was in the "Digital Learning Environment" with a team average rating of 1.98 (compared to the AdvancED average of 1.88).   Team average ratings in these sample classrooms were all above the AdvancED Network Averages across the board.

With the highest rating in the Well Managed Learning Environment, Team members observed students who spoke and interacted respectfully with the teacher and their peers.  They followed classroom rules and worked well in small groups with others.  Transitions in most classrooms were made smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another, even in kindergarten classrooms.  The Supportive Learning Environment was evident as students demonstrated positive attitudes about the classroom procedures and interactions in learning.  Students appeared to take risks in learning without fear of negative feedback from teachers or classmates.  Support and assistance were given to students as they asked questions and answered questions that needed revision.

In the Digital Learning Environment, which was rated the lowest of the seven categories on the eleot™ observation tool, students were seldom seen using technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning in the middle school and the high school, but most students in the Scholars Academy were using technology on a consistent basis to gather, evaluate and use information for learning, including project based lessons and problem-based authentic tasks.  As team members observed smart boards installed in most classrooms, the device was seen as a teacher-director tool to display information and present lesson tasks, very seldom observed with students using it as an interactive tool for learning.  However there were pockets of excellence in many classrooms where both teachers and students were using devices to create original works to be with real audiences.

In almost all classrooms, Thomasville City School students were not only polite and orderly, but they were attentive and focused in their classrooms.  Students demonstrated evidence of a well-organized and trained group of learners who respectfully followed school rules.  It was obvious to the Team that good student behavior was an expectation throughout the district.  In the Scholars Academy classrooms, it was remarkable how students operated independently both in groups and one-on-one with technology to complete lessons on their own time schedule in many cases.  Students were observed in the commons areas, with little or no direct supervision and appeared to be self directed and courteous with fellow students.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

| A. Equitable Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 2.38 | Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs | 27.03% | 16.22% | 24.32% | 32.43% |
| 2. | 3.16 | Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support | 37.84% | 45.95% | 10.81% | 5.41% |
| 3. | 3.38 | Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied | 40.54% | 56.76% | 2.70% | 0.00% |
| 4. | 1.97 | Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences | 10.81% | 21.62% | 21.62% | 45.95% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.72** | | | | | | |

| B. High Expectations | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 3.30 | Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher | 37.84% | 54.05% | 8.11% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 3.30 | Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable | 40.54% | 48.65% | 10.81% | 0.00% |
| 3. | 2.41 | Is provided exemplars of high quality work | 21.62% | 24.32% | 27.03% | 27.03% |
| 4. | 3.08 | Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks | 32.43% | 43.24% | 24.32% | 0.00% |
| 5. | 2.84 | Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing) | 35.14% | 27.03% | 24.32% | 13.51% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.98** | | | | | | |

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| C. Supportive Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Average | Description | Very Evident | Evident | Somewhat Evident | Not Observed |
| 1. | 3.49 | Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive | 56.76% | 35.14% | 8.11% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 3.65 | Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning | 70.27% | 24.32% | 5.41% | 0.00% |
| 3. | 3.27 | Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback) | 54.05% | 21.62% | 21.62% | 2.70% |
| 4. | 3.35 | Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks | 43.24% | 48.65% | 8.11% | 0.00% |
| 5. | 2.89 | Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs | 32.43% | 40.54% | 10.81% | 16.22% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.33** | | | | | | |

| D. Active Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Average | Description | Very Evident | Evident | Somewhat Evident | Not Observed |
| 1. | 3.03 | Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students | 32.43% | 40.54% | 24.32% | 2.70% |
| 2. | 2.73 | Makes connections from content to real-life experiences | 27.03% | 40.54% | 10.81% | 21.62% |
| 3. | 3.27 | Is actively engaged in the learning activities | 48.65% | 35.14% | 10.81% | 5.41% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.01** | | | | | | |

| E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Average | Description | Very Evident | Evident | Somewhat Evident | Not Observed |
| 1. | 3.05 | Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning | 29.73% | 54.05% | 8.11% | 8.11% |
| 2. | 3.22 | Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding | 29.73% | 62.16% | 8.11% | 0.00% |
| 3. | 3.24 | Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content | 40.54% | 45.95% | 10.81% | 2.70% |
| 4. | 2.95 | Understands how her/his work is assessed | 21.62% | 62.16% | 5.41% | 10.81% |
| 5. | 2.92 | Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback | 35.14% | 37.84% | 10.81% | 16.22% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.08** | | | | | | |

| F. Well-Managed Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Average | Description | Very Evident | Evident | Somewhat Evident | Not Observed |
| 1. | 3.49 | Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers | 51.35% | 45.95% | 2.70% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 3.46 | Follows classroom rules and works well with others | 56.76% | 35.14% | 5.41% | 2.70% |
| 3. | 3.03 | Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities | 29.73% | 51.35% | 10.81% | 8.11% |
| 4. | 2.38 | Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities | 16.22% | 32.43% | 24.32% | 27.03% |
| 5. | 3.41 | Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences | 43.24% | 54.05% | 2.70% | 0.00% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.15** | | | | | | |

| G. Digital Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 2.38 | Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning | 27.03% | 21.62% | 13.51% | 37.84% |
| 2. | 1.76 | Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning | 13.51% | 13.51% | 8.11% | 64.86% |
| 3. | 1.97 | Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning | 13.51% | 24.32% | 8.11% | 54.05% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.04** | | | | | | |

# Findings

## Opportunity for Improvement

Create a formal process for collaborative learning groups to align the curriculum both horizontally and vertically across buildings, between levels of learning, and across content areas.

(Indicators 3.5)

*Evidence and Rationale*

The Thomasville City Schools' Accreditation Report cited the need to align the curriculum vertically across grade levels and content areas. Teachers also reported a disconnect between levels of schooling for students transitioning from one grade band to the next with a variety of feeder systems into the secondary schools.

Although autonomy is a widely promoted policy in the system, highly variable expectations and support systems were observed to lead to inconsistencies in preparation for the next level of learning.

Students at all levels of the system deserve a guaranteed curriculum of high expectations to promote college and career readiness.

## Powerful Practice

The school system has placed a district-wide focus on professional learning to implement and improve instructional strategies in classrooms.

(Indicators 3.6)

*Evidence and Rationale*

Documents clearly list defined duties and responsibilities for Instructional Coaches placed in each of the

schools in the district.  These certified staff work with teachers to update the instructional strategies used in classrooms and demonstrate best practices for interventions that are research-based.

Learning targets like "I CAN" statements and essential questions were posted in many classrooms reflecting effective teaching and learning practices from the professional learning sessions with Instructional Coaches. Each school principal has scheduled common planning sessions weekly to support professional learning.  In addition, Team members observed Formative Instructional Practices (FIP) to support effective instruction in classrooms.  Rather than resisting change, faculty in all schools reported that they welcomed information on best practices from the Instructional Coaches to help them perfect their craft.

Although the AdvancED External Review Team reviewed student performance data that showed improvement on state assessments over time in trend data charts, it is recognized that professional learning will be one of the most powerful ways to begin to close the achievement gaps for students who are not yet achieving at or above state averages on the Georgia Common Core state standards.

## Powerful Practice
Thomasville City Schools promotes an innovative system of education for the purpose of customizing programs and services to meet the unique needs of students.
(Indicators 2.4, 3.1, 3.12)

### *Evidence and Rationale*
It was learned in interviews and confirmed in documentation that the school system provides for the Scholars Academy and Advancing Individual Minds of Students  (AIMS) program to promote services for high ability and high achieving students to reach academic goals considerably beyond the regular middle school and high school curriculum.  There are Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) offerings in addition to an International Baccalaureate (IB) program to promote advanced opportunities for student learning.

In addition, the district has designed opportunities for students who struggle to meet the expectation for grade level and required content specific classes like the Academic Recovery Center (ARC), a drop out retrieval program for students needing services to allow them to gain enough high school credits to graduate.  Another unique program is the Catapult Academy designed for adults in the community to receive their diploma for cumulating credits to be awarded as a certificate of graduation.   The Great Promise Partnership with Caterpillar Incorporated is designed to allow Thomasville High School graduates to begin working in the Caterpillar Industries immediately after high school with certificates in specific work-related fields.

It was observed that the system promotes partnerships with Thomasville Center for the Performing Arts, Thomas University, civic organizations, the Southwest Georgia Technical College and the City of Thomasville Boys and Girls Club.  Students participate in enrichment activities like learning to play strings as early as grade five and dance opportunities with the Thomasville Center for the Performing Arts. There are cooperative agreements with local colleges for dual enrollment classes for students at Thomasville High School and after-school activities supported by local service organizations, including tutoring, for students in elementary and middle schools.

It was learned in an interview with the superintendent and observed in the schools that each elementary has a focus area such as "the arts" at Scott Elementary, a STEM emphasis at Jerger Elementary and just being designed is a "career focus" at Harper Elementary.

Each school is required to prepare a unique 45-Day Plan to develop and monitor learning targets for student achievement.  Schools are charged with implementing innovative approaches to teaching and learning to help accelerate student achievement.  The plans are monitored for completion every 45 days  as new goals and strategies are implemented.

Even the School Nutrition Director has implemented an innovative food taste-testing program and has piloted new food offerings including a salad bar for staff.  In interviews, faculties were praised for going "above and beyond" by parents.  Students reported caring teachers "…who strike a delicate balance between 'being your friend' and being your teacher," as quoted by a high school student.

When a school district creates innovative opportunities to meet student needs, the community and the students can benefit greatly.

# Leadership Capacity

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress towards its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its institutional purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to enact strategies to improve results of student learning.

Purpose and direction are critical to successful institutions. A study conducted in 2010 by the London-based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported that "in addition to improving performance, the research indicates that having a sense of shared purpose also improves employee engagement" and that "lack of understanding around purpose can lead to demotivation and emotional detachment, which in turn lead to a disengaged and dissatisfied workforce."

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in more than 32,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

Governance and leadership are key factors in raising institutional quality. Leaders, both local administrators and governing boards/authorities, are responsible for ensuring all learners achieve while also managing many other facets of an institution. Institutions that function effectively do so without tension between the governing board/authority, administrators, and educators and have established relationships of mutual respect and a shared vision (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998). In a meta-analysis of educational institution leadership research, Leithwood and Sun (2012) found that leaders (school and governing boards/authority) can significantly "influence school conditions through their achievement of a shared vision and agreed-on goals for the organization, their high expectations and support of organizational members, and their practices that strengthen school culture and foster collaboration within the organization." With the increasing demands of accountability placed on institutional leaders, leaders who empower others need considerable autonomy and involve their communities to attain continuous improvement goals. Leaders who engage in such practices experience a greater level of success (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Similarly, governing boards/authorities that focus on policy-making are more likely to allow institutional leaders the autonomy to make decisions that impact teachers and students and are less responsive to politicization than boards/authorities that respond to vocal citizens (Greene, 1992).

AdvancED's experience, gained through evaluation of best practices, has indicated that a successful institution has leaders who are advocates for the institution's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The institution's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

# Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 | The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success. | 3.00 | 2.67 |
| 1.2 | The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success. | 2.40 | 2.69 |
| 1.3 | The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills. | 2.80 | 2.87 |
| 1.4 | Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning. | 2.00 | 2.64 |

# Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools. | 3.00 | 2.96 |
| 2.2 | The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively. | 3.20 | 2.99 |
| 2.3 | The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively. | 2.80 | 3.20 |
| 2.4 | Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction. | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| 2.5 | Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction. | 3.00 | 2.69 |

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 2.6 | Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success. | 3.00 | 2.78 |

# Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys (student, parent, and teacher) are directly correlated to the AdvancED Standards and indicators. They provide not only direct information about stakeholder satisfaction but also become a source of data for triangulation by the External Review Team as it evaluates indicators.

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution, survey results, and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results.

| Evaluative Criteria | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Questionnaire Administration | 3.00 | 3.43 |
| Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis | 2.20 | 3.12 |

# Findings

**Improvement Priority**

Study, create, and implement a communication structure with clear direction and expectation to support effective internal processes between central office personnel and school staff.
(Indicators 1.4)

*Evidence and Rationale*

Staff reported a lack of understanding about the roles and responsibilities of some central office positions. The system's Accreditation Report repeatedly mentioned stakeholder communications as an issue across the district. The AdvancED External Review Team observed many effective external communication avenues for parent and community stakeholders such as school newsletters and brochures describing programs and services available to students. There is a well-written and publishable magazine describing the programs available at the Scholars Academy for grades six through twelve, all composed and illustrated by high school students. Parents praised the availability of the Power School parent portal where student grades and assignments are transparent for families who has signed up for an account to access their student's records.

Although the Team observed the need for updates on the district website, such as the posting of board

minutes, meeting calendars, and the listing of board policies for transparency, the webpages were reported to be an important avenue of information for parents and community members.   Other avenues for external communication reported in interviews were Remind 101, a calling system to alert parents of upcoming events, school and teacher websites, Facebook presence, and Parent Involvement Coordinators in Title I buildings to promote parent involvement and communication.

When both internal and external communications are informative and supportive of student learning, students can achieve at higher levels, parents can be more supportive, and systems can enjoy more effective organizational structures to support teaching and learning.

## Powerful Practice
The board members of the Thomasville City Schools act as a cohesive unit while carrying out their roles and responsibilities as the governing body.
(Indicators 2.2)

### Evidence and Rationale
In interviews, it was learned that the superintendent and board enjoy a collaborative relationship in support of student learning and innovation in the district.  Documents revealed that board members participate in continuous training and professional learning programs to keep abreast of the latest trends and expectations for school governance.  All seven school board members made the effort to attend the AdvancED interview schedule and all contributed greatly to the conversation about the strengths of the school district and the pride that is evident in the Thomasville community.

Thomasville High School was recently recognized at the state AdvancED/SACS conference for 100 years of continuous accreditation for the high school.  The school board has continually sought value-added processes and procedures to promote continuous improvement in the Thomasville City Schools.

The school board has managed to pass millage rates in the past few years to support building improvement and upgrades.  In addition, they have demonstrated their ability to lead the system in applying for three Educational Special Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) tax incentives over the past 13 years.

When a school board has a positive relationship with top administrative personnel and act as a cohesive unit within their roles and responsibilities, the best interests of students will be served.

## Powerful Practice
Thomasville City Schools promotes an innovative system of education for the purpose of customizing programs and services to meet the unique needs of students.
(Indicators 2.4, 3.1, 3.12)

### Evidence and Rationale
It was learned in interviews and confirmed in documentation that the school system provides for the Scholars Academy and Advancing Individual Minds of Students  (AIMS) program to promote services for high ability and

high achieving students to reach academic goals considerably beyond the regular middle school and high school curriculum.  There are Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) offerings in addition to an International Baccalaureate (IB) program to promote advanced opportunities for student learning.

In addition, the district has designed opportunities for students who struggle to meet the expectation for grade level and required content specific classes like the Academic Recovery Center (ARC), a drop out retrieval program for students needing services to allow them to gain enough high school credits to graduate.  Another unique program is the Catapult Academy designed for adults in the community to receive their diploma for cumulating credits to be awarded as a certificate of graduation.   The Great Promise Partnership with Caterpillar Incorporated is designed to allow Thomasville High School graduates to begin working in the Caterpillar Industries immediately after high school with certificates in specific work-related fields.

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When a school district creates innovative opportunities to meet student needs, the community and the students can benefit greatly.

# Resource Utilization

The use and distribution of resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of an institution and the students served. Institutions must ensure that resources are aligned with the stated mission and are distributed equitably so that the needs of students are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes an examination of the allocation and use of resources, the equity of resource distribution to need, the ability of the institution to ensure appropriate levels of funding and sustainability of resources, as well as evidence of long-range capital and resource planning effectiveness.

Institutions, regardless of their size, need access to sufficient resources and systems of support to be able to engage in sustained and meaningful efforts that result in a continuous improvement cycle. Indeed, a study conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Pan, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L., 2003) "demonstrated a strong relationship between resources and student success... both the level of resources and their explicit allocation seem to affect educational outcomes."

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the more than 32,000 institutions in the AdvancED Network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.1 | The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs. | 2.80 | 2.98 |
| 4.2 | Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations. | 3.00 | 2.98 |
| 4.3 | The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff. | 2.00 | 3.05 |
| 4.4 | The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system. | 2.00 | 2.67 |

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.5 | The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system. | 2.80 | 2.82 |
| 4.6 | The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs. | 2.40 | 2.64 |
| 4.7 | The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served. | 3.00 | 2.65 |
| 4.8 | The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students. | 3.00 | 2.64 |

# Findings

**Improvement Priority**

Conduct a review of the allocation of staffing at the administrative level to maximize human resources.

(Indicators 4.1)

*Evidence and Rationale*

With the administrative report that succession planning is being discussed, the External Review Team noted that future planning should include consulting services for the effective and efficient use of staff at the central office.  It was observed in the district organizational chart that there was a lack of aligned job responsibilities in support of student learning as many hats were assumed by new personnel as they were hired instead of realigning all positions to best fit the needs of the schools and staff.

It was reported in multiple interviews that there was a lack of technology leadership when critical staff were not replaced as positions were vacated at the beginning of the school year.  Some teachers revealed that they needed training in the use of technology to assist students for research, solving problems, and creating authentic works. Many staff asked for professional development opportunities to learn how to integrate technology in their classrooms.

Best practices require that streamlining supervisory roles will allow for more efficient decision making and organizational support as teachers seek to improve instruction and increase student achievement.

**Opportunity for Improvement**

Conduct a feasibility study of buildings and grounds to determine equity of facilities to provide safe and secure spaces for student learning.

(Indicators 4.3, 4.4)

*Evidence and Rationale*

Although some buildings and school facilities were observed to be attractive and updated in the district, there is a wide discrepancy in learning spaces for students and staff among schools.  The latest long-range planning document offered to the External Review Team in the artifacts was dated 2011-2016.

Although parents did not cite school safety as a concern, the Team observed unlocked doors at entrances to many buildings and most classrooms.  Students reported that they felt safe and secure in their schools and classrooms, but outside experts could advise the district on the best course of action to secure learning spaces to reinforce student and parent feelings of safety.

The appearance of attractive, well-maintained buildings and safe and secure learning spaces can contribute to an expectation of higher student achievement and pride in learning.

# Conclusion

The Thomasville City School District consists of five schools including a "school within a school" concept called the Scholars Academy for high ability students and another "school within a school" called the Academic Learning Center for students who need an alternative to the traditional high school setting. The city of Thomasville is known as the Rose City and takes pride in the many traditions in this southwestern Georgia community of approximately 19,000 people. Through interviews, a review of evidence, observations and deliberations, the External Review Team identified several pervasive themes that emerged during the time spent in the school district. During interviews and on-site visits, the schools exuded a welcoming culture in each building where dedication to students was evidence throughout the district. There was sincere praise for the teachers and school staff by the students, parents, and community members. The commitment to high student achievement and the goal of meeting the needs of students was evident to all Team members. There was a high level of professionalism observed on the part of school staff; and, the students' responses in classrooms were sincere and unrehearsed in most classrooms.

The superintendent and staff reported that the entire district is student-focused with the needs of students at the top of the priority list. The schools take special pride in designing programs and services based upon student needs, both to survive as a school system and also to meet the community demands for excellence in education. The school district recently produced the Thomasville City Schools Strategic Improvement Planning Report, an updated comprehensive plan to lead the schools into the future. One parent is quoted as saying, "This is such a nurturing environment; kids know the teachers and teachers know the kids." Staff shared their caring and concern for individual students during interviews. The district supports programs and services not only for high ability students, but also for struggling students with a well-developed Response to Intervention menu of services to assist students who need additional instruction but in the different format. Principals are advocates for students and families beyond the school day as they sponsor programs for families in need of food and shelter and other services designed to support charities in the community.

One powerful practice cited by the External Review Team was the fact that board members of Thomasville City Schools act as a cohesive unit who continually keep what is in the best interest of the students at the heart of all of their decision-making. The superintendent and the board are dedicated to making hard decisions that will benefit students and the community. The additional training reported from the school board members has assisted them in "staying in their lanes" reflecting the fact that board members know what their roles and responsibilities are as a governing body.

Another Powerful Practice cited by the Team is the school district's continual pursuit of customized programs and services to support student learning in the academics, in athletics, and in the arts. In interviews it was learned that both staff and the community continually seek ways to promote innovative systems to meet the unique needs of students. They have implemented the "school within a school" concept with the Scholars Academy for grades 6-12, the AIMS program at MacIntyre Park Middle School for advanced studies such as Spanish Language course work as early as grade 6. The newly designed Advanced Courses Curriculum (ACC) at the Thomasville High School promotes IB coursework and AP programs for students who elect the rigor of these courses. Each elementary school has a special focus such as "the arts magnet" at Scott

Elementary, Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) emphasis at Jerger Elementary, and a newly-designed career focus for Harper Elementary.

The school system includes a multiracial student body, with more that 60 percent of the students identified as African American and approximately 43 percent of the school population consisting of Caucasian students. The district reports a poverty rate of approximately 65 percent with many students qualifying for free and reduced lunches. There is an open enrollment policy where parents can elect the elementary school where they want their student to attend. Innovative thinking on the part of staff and board members has earned the schools much recognition including being named an AP Honor School at Thomasville High School each year since 2008.  The high school had 52 AP Scholars in 2014, and the graduating class of 2014 included 31% of the students who had scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam. This was an outstanding increase from the 13.8 % who had scored at this level in 2011.  All three elementary schools have earned the designation of Title I Reward School with either a "Highest Performing Reward School" designation or a "Highest Progress Reward School" for continual increases of student achievement for the past three years.

Another Powerful Practice identified by the Team was the district-wide focus on professional learning to implement best practices and improve instructional strategies in classrooms. It was reported by administration and confirmed by teachers that all staff are expected to participate in school level professional learning communities led by Instructional Coaches in every building.  Professional staff members are enrolled in the FIP program of Formative Instructional Practices where teachers have met in professional learning communities to deconstruct the Georgia Common Core Standards in order to align their curriculum across grade levels.

The following Opportunities for Improvement were identified by the External Review Team from evidence, interviews, and observations during the External Review.  When the school district plans for future improvements in their strategies and practices for school and district improvement, they will want to consider the following suggestions:

-Create a formal process for collaborative learning groups to align the curriculum vertically across buildings, between levels of learning, and across content areas.

-Conduct a feasibility study of buildings and grounds to determine equity of facilities to provide safe and secure spaces for student learning.

The External Review Team appreciates the district's history of increasing student achievement and recognizes the efforts that school staff, parents, and the community offer to students in enrichment activities customized to the needs of students. The athletics and club activities are noteworthy and the after school tutoring is essential to student success. The Improvement Priorities listed for the school district are offered to help guide future planning and should include outside consulting services to assist the district in making decisions based upon proactive planning and effective communication strategies. These Improvement Priorities are intended to bring teaching and learning into the 21st Century with even higher expectations for students to become "… problem solvers, life-long learners and productive members of the local and global communities" as reflected in the school district mission.

The school board and superintendent are to be commended for their leadership in commissioning this rigorous AdvancED/SACS accreditation process with the on-site Review Team and for taking the risk of allowing educators from other states as well as neighboring Georgia school districts to visit the schools in the Thomasville City School system.  It was shared in interviews that the superintendent and school leadership teams welcomed the feedback from the accreditation process in order to reach even higher toward the goals and aspirations of the school district.

In conclusion, the External Review Team appreciates the school district and schools' hospitality and willingness to achieve excellence by participating in this process. The team would like to thank the school staff for making the team feel welcome and comfortable while hosting the four-day accreditation process.

## Improvement Priorities

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Conduct a review of the allocation of staffing at the administrative level to maximize human resources.
- Study, create, and implement a communication structure with clear direction and expectation to support effective internal processes between central office personnel and school staff.

# Accreditation Recommendation

## Index of Education Quality

The Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) provides a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of indicators and evaluative criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus.

The IEQ™ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

|  | External Review IEQ Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|
| Overall Score | 275.61 | 282.79 |
| Teaching and Learning Impact | 279.05 | 274.14 |
| Leadership Capacity | 278.33 | 296.08 |
| Resource Utilization | 262.50 | 286.32 |

The IEQ™ results include information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria as well as to other institutions in the AdvancED Network. The institution should use the information in this report, including the corresponding performance rubrics, to identify specific areas of improvement.

Consequently, the External Review Team recommends to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that the institution earn the distinction of accreditation for a five-year term. AdvancED will review the results of the External Review to make a final determination including the appropriate next steps for the institution in response to these findings.

# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

| Institution Name | Teaching and Learning Impact | Leadership Capacity | Resource Utilization | Overall IEQ Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| E. R. Jerger Elementary School | 266.67 | 281.82 | 228.57 | 264.10 |
| J. K. Harper Elementary School | 309.52 | 318.18 | 257.14 | 302.56 |
| MacIntyre Park Middle School | 261.90 | 290.91 | 271.43 | 271.79 |
| Thomasville High School | 295.24 | 318.18 | 257.14 | 294.87 |
| W. Fred Scott Elementary School | 285.71 | 300.00 | 285.71 | 289.74 |

# Team Roster

| Member | Brief Biography |
|---|---|
| Dr. Vicki L DeMao | Vicki DeMao, a Lead Evaluator for AdvancED, has worked in more than ten different states in the Midwest and in the South, leading teams of educators in more than 20 different school districts and Educational Service Agencies. Her current responsibilities include consultant and administrator for Centerville-Abington Community Schools and Field Consultant for Indiana NCA/AdvancED schools identified for school improvement under Title I guidelines. Her past educational experiences include: Assistant Professor at University of the Pacific in Stockton, California; Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for Richmond Community School in Indiana; and, Field Coach for Gifted Education in the state of Indiana. Vicki started her career as a teacher and has been a principal of two different K-6 elementary schools, supervisor for Pre-K to grade 12, curriculum director, grant writer, and federal programs coordinator. Vicki has been a presenter at state and national conferences and works with schools and school districts in Indiana to implement the state laws governing gifted education identification, service options, and program evaluation. As a community volunteer, Vicki has been a First Tee Charter Board Member, Chamber of Commerce subcommittee member, original grant writer for Birth to Five, Inc., university advisor for Indiana University East, trained reviewer of federal grants, adjunct professor at Earlham College, and grant writer for public and private organizations. |
| Mr. R. D. Harter | R. D. Harter has served as the public information director for the Dougherty County School System in Albany, GA, for the past seven years. Prior to entering the district position in PK-12 public education, Mr. Harter provided advertising and public relations services to clients as president of R. D. Harter Marketing, Inc. for 12 years. His skill strengths are communications strategy, consensus and relationship building, media relations and electronic and traditional publication development. Mr. Harter served in administrative, advancement, effectiveness, and accreditation leadership functions in postsecondary technical institutions for 15 years. |
| Dr. Joy Mockelmann | Joy Mockelmann, PhD, has been a Lead Evaluator with AdvancED since 2009. Previous experience includes service as a Quality Assurance Review Team Lead, North Central Team member, professional consultant and coach, District Coach to Wyoming Title I grant schools, Supervisor for Wyoming Department of Education Educational Quality and Accountability Unit, State System of Support Lead, District Superintendent, Curriculum Director, Principal, Teacher/Professor of Middle School, Community College, Education, Research, Literacy, Leadership, and Administration classes. Online facilitator for University of Phoenix graduate-level courses: Educational Finance and Budget, The Role and Functions of the Principal, & Human Relations and Organizational Behavior in Education. BS-University of Colorado. MS & Ph.D.-University of Southern Mississippi. Publications: Dissertation Title: ESEA Title I and its implications on equalization among the states, 1997. |
| Mrs. Terri Elizabeth Comer | Terri Comer has worked in multiple areas of education in the states of Tennessee and Florida, primarily focusing on early childhood and elementary education. She has served as a child life specialist, child development center director, high school health teacher, early childhood consultant, peer teacher, title I teacher and lead teacher. Terri holds a Master's degree in Education from East Tennessee State University and will complete a second Master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of North Florida the summer of 2015. Currently, Terri serves her school as a lead kindergarten teacher, SAC chairman, a member of the Curriculum Council, School Leadership Team and was the Charles E. Bennett Elementary school 2013 Teacher of the Year. |

| Member | Brief Biography |
|--------|----------------|
| Mr. Kraig Howell | Mr. Howell has worked in multiple school districts within the state of Georgia, primarily in the Metro Atlanta and Middle Georgia areas. He has served as a teacher, district level support staff and administrator for programs serving students with disabilities, as well as at-risk students. He currently serves as the Coordinator of Instructional Student Supports for Monroe County Schools. He provides guidance and support for RtI, SST, 504, PBIS, and Special Education programs. |
| Dr. Brittney Wilson | Dr. Brittney Wilson serves as Chief Academic Officer for Calhoun City Schools, Calhoun, GA. She has served in the classroom teaching mathematics, business education, and special education in K-12 environments and has served as adjunct professor for the University of Georgia and Liberty University. Dr. Wilson has served on doctoral committees for Liberty University and has served as teacher/facilitator for professional learning classes for the Northwest Georgia Regional Education Services Agency (RESA). Her doctoral work was completed at the University of Georgia and she continues to grow, professionally, by actively seeking opportunities to discover new and innovative strategies to help students reach their full potential. Her love of learning extends to sharing her passion and strategies with teachers and students. She aspires to inspire and empower others to use their own creativity and ingenuity to establish a learning environment where anything is possible, where ideas and imagination are welcome, and great successes are accomplished. |

# Next Steps

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with stakeholders.

2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the Powerful Practices section to maximize their impact on the institution.

3. Consider the Opportunities for Improvement identified throughout the report that are provided by the team in the spirit of continuous improvement and the institution's commitment to improving its capacity to improve student learning.

4. Develop action plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Improvement Priorities.

5. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

6. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Improvement Priorities. Institutions are required to respond to all Improvement Priorities. The report will be reviewed at the appropriate state, national, and/or international levels to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to address the Improvement Priorities. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the responses to the Improvement Priorities and the resulting improvement.

7. Continue to meet the AdvancED Standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

# About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. AdvancED serves as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools and school systems – enrolling more than 20 million students - across the United States and 70 countries.

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 became part of AdvancED.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. The Accreditation Divisions of AdvancED share research-based quality standards that cross school system, state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified and consistent process designed to engage educational institutions in continuous improvement.

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